



State Capitol | Lansing, Michigan 48913

PH (517) 373.6920 | FAX (517) 373.2751

www.senate.michigan.gov/gop/senator/kuipers/

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Tuesday, Sept. 9, 2003

Contact: Darin Ackerman
(517) 373-6920

Help Available for Displaced Migrant Workers

State Legislators Seek Food, Travel Assistance for Zelenka Nursery Workers

(LANSING) – With more than 500 workers laid off at a Grand Haven Township nursery, state Sen. Wayne Kuipers, Rep. Bill Huizenga and Rep. Barb Vander Veen said Monday they are making their offices available as a clearinghouse for information for use by the workers, most of whom are migrants.

“The workers are worried that the company’s apparent insolvency jeopardizes the value of the paychecks they have or are due to receive,” Vander Veen said. “We are concerned that they receive just compensation, but also that they have enough to get by on until things can be worked out.”

The Zelenka Nursery laid off most of its workers last week, calling back only a handful while the company and farm worker legal representatives sort through the aftermath of the layoffs. According to press accounts, the company’s telephone hotline states that checks the workers have are worthless because the company’s creditors have backed out.

“I have been in contact with the Family Independence Agency to ensure that the workers and their families have at least two days worth of food and fuel so that, if they desire, they can return to their permanent homes,” Kuipers said. “I have also spoken with Zelenka officials and lenders in an effort to facilitate an agreement and make sure that these workers get what they’re owed.”

Kuipers, Huizenga and Vander Veen said workers are free to call their offices for information as it becomes available.

“I am impressed with how the community came together to help out those in need,” said Huizenga who attended the food drive on Saturday. “I witness a woman who drove from Muskegon donate 200 lbs of ground beef. West Ottawa Schools did a great job in helping to organize the food drive. I am proud of the way our community has responded.”